

HARVARD UNIVERSITY
THE BIOLOGICAL LABORATORIES
16 DIVINITY AVENUE
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

14 March 1967

Dr. F. H. C. Crick
Laboratory of Molecular Biology
Hills Road, Cambridge, England

Dear Francis:

I enclose a copy of a letter that I have written to Maurice Wilkins about Jim Watson's book. Since the matter concerns you so intimately, and since you asked Jim in one of your letters to consult me, I am sending this on to you. You and Maurice have raised some very difficult questions. It would require the wisdom of Solomon to answer them adequately. Since I lack any such wisdom I can only set down what I think.

I was shown one of your letters to Mr. Pusey in which you raised an issue of scientific ethics. As I remember it, you said that it is generally a rule of conduct among scientists that one participant in a joint research does not publish his results without the agreement of those who have taken part in the work with him. As far as research is concerned you are of course absolutely right about this. However, I think that the issue here is of a different sort. Jim is not writing a research report but an account of past events in which he was a major participant. Publication of personal recollections of this sort, it seems to me, does not require the approval of those who took part in the earlier events, although there is certainly every reason to check the account carefully for accuracy and fairness to the others who were involved. If politicians and generals had to get the approval of their former associates before publishing their memoirs the world would certainly have lost a great many books -- some bad ones to be sure, but also some excellent ones. I do not think that the rules relating to memoirs of scientists should be much more restrictive than those governing other people.

At any rate, that is the way I look upon it now. Do let me know whether it seems reasonable to you. Best wishes.

Yours sincerely,


John T. Edsall

JTE:G
enclosure